

**§ 1.401(a)(4)-6 Contributory defined benefit plans.**

(a) *Introduction.* This section provides rules necessary for determining whether a contributory DB plan satisfies the nondiscriminatory amount requirement of § 1.401(a)(4)-1(b)(2). Paragraph (b) of this section provides rules for determining the amount of benefits derived from employer contributions (employer-provided benefits) under a contributory DB plan for purposes of determining whether the plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)-1(b)(2) with respect to such amounts. Paragraph (c) of this section provides the exclusive rules for determining whether a contributory DB plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)-1(b)(2) with respect to the amount of benefits derived from employee contributions not allocated to separate accounts (employee-provided benefits). See § 1.401(a)(4)-1(b)(2)(ii)(B) for the exclusive tests applicable to employee contributions allocated to separate accounts under a section 401(m) plan.

(b) *Determination of employer-provided benefit*—(1) *General rule.* An employee's employer-provided benefit under a contributory DB plan for purposes of section 401(a)(4) equals the difference between the employee's total benefit and the employee's employee-provided benefit under the plan. The rules of section 411(c) generally must be used to determine the employee's employer-provided benefit for this purpose. However, paragraphs (b)(2) through (b)(6) of this section provide alternative methods for determining the employee's employer-provided benefit.

(2) *Composition-of-workforce method*—(i) *General rule.* A contributory DB plan that satisfies paragraph (b)(2)(ii) (A) and (B) of this section may determine employees' employer-provided benefit rates under the rules of paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section.

(ii) *Eligibility requirements*—(A) *Uniform rate of employee contributions.* A contributory DB plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) if all employees make employee contributions at the same rate, expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation (the employee contribution rate). A plan does not fail to satisfy this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) merely because it eliminates employee contributions for all employees with

plan year compensation below a specified contribution breakpoint that is either a stated dollar amount or a stated percentage of covered compensation (within the meaning of § 1.401(l)-1(c)(7)); or merely because all employees make employee contributions at the same rate (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation) with respect to plan year compensation up to the contribution breakpoint (base employee contribution rate) and at a higher rate (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation) that is the same for all employees with respect to plan year compensation above the contribution breakpoint (excess employee contribution rate). A plan described in paragraph (c)(4)(i) of this section that satisfies paragraph (c)(4)(iii) of this section is deemed to satisfy this paragraph.

(B) *Demographic requirements*—(1) *In general.* A contributory DB plan satisfies this paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) if it satisfies either of the demographic tests in paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) (2) or (3) of this section.

(2) *Minimum percentage test.* This test is satisfied only if more than 40 percent of the NHCEs in the plan have attained ages at least equal to the plan's target age, and more than 20 percent of the NHCEs in the plan have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan. For this purpose, a plan's target age is the lower of age 50 or the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan minus X years, where X equals 20 minus the product of five times the employee contribution rate under the plan. In no case, however, may X years be fewer than zero (0) years. Thus, for example, if the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan is 53 and the employee contribution rate is two percent of plan year compensation, the plan's target age is 43 years (i.e.,  $53 - (20 - (5 \times 2))$ ).

(3) *Ratio test.* This test is satisfied only if the percentage of all nonhighly compensated nonexcludable employees, who are in the plan and who have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs in the plan, is at least 70 percent of the percentage of all highly compensated nonexcludable employees, who are in the plan and who have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age

of the HCEs in the plan. Attained ages must be determined as of the beginning of the plan year. In lieu of determining the actual distribution of the attained ages of the HCEs, an employer may assume that 50 percent of all HCEs have attained ages at least equal to the average attained age of the HCEs.

(iii) *Determination of employer-provided benefit*—(A) *Safe harbor plans other than section 401(l) plans.* For purposes of applying the exception to the safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)-3(b)(6)(viii) with respect to employer-provided benefits under a plan other than a section 401(l) plan, the employee's entire accrued benefit is treated as employer-provided.

(B) *Section 401(l) plans*—(1) *General rule.* For purposes of applying the exception to the safe harbor in § 1.401(a)(4)-3(b)(6)(viii) with respect to employer-provided benefits under a section 401(l) plan, an employee's base benefit percentage and excess benefit percentage are reduced, or an employee's gross benefit percentage is reduced, by subtracting the product of the employee contribution rate and the factor determined under paragraph (b)(2)(iv) of this section from the respective percentages for the plan year. For this purpose, the employee contribution rate is the highest rate of employee contributions applicable to any potential level of plan year compensation for that plan year under the plan.

(2) *Excess plans with varying contribution rates.* In the case of a defined benefit excess plan described in the second sentence of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, solely for purposes of reducing an employee's base benefit percentage as required under paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(I) of this section, it may be assumed that the employee's employee contribution rate equals the weighted average of the base employee contribution rate and the excess employee contribution rate. In determining this weighted average, the weight of the base employee contribution rate is equal to a fraction, the numerator of which is the lesser of the integration level and the contribution breakpoint and the denominator of which is the integration level. The weight of the excess employee con-

tribution rate is equal to the difference between one and the weight of the base employee contribution rate.

(3) *Offset plans with varying contribution rates.* In the case of an offset plan described in the second sentence of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section, an equivalent adjustment to the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(2) of this section may be made to the offset percentage.

(C) *Employer-provided benefits under the general test.* For purposes of applying the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)-3(c) with respect to employer-provided benefits, an employee's normal and most valuable accrual rates otherwise determined under § 1.401(a)(4)-3(d) (without applying any of the options under § 1.401(a)(4)-3(d)(3) other than the fresh-start alternative of § 1.401(a)(4)-3(d)(3)(iii)) are each reduced by subtracting the product of the employee's contributions (expressed as a percentage of plan year compensation) and the factor determined under paragraph (b)(2)(iv) of this section from the respective accrual rates. A plan may then apply the optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)-3(d)(3) (i) and (ii) to this resulting accrual rate.

(D) *Additional limitation.* A plan may not use the composition-of-workforce method provided in this paragraph (b)(2) to determine an employee's base benefit percentage, excess benefit percentage, gross benefit percentage, offset percentage, or accrual rates unless employee contributions have been made at the same rate (or rates) throughout the period after the fresh-start date or throughout the measurement period used to determine accrual rates.

(iv) *Determination of plan factor.* The factor for a plan is determined under the following table based on the average entry age of the employees in the plan and on whether the plan determines benefits based on average compensation. For this purpose, average entry age equals the average attained age of all employees in the plan, minus the average years of participation of all employees in the plan. A plan is treated as determining benefits based on average compensation if it determines benefits based on compensation

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averaged over a specified period not exceeding five consecutive years (or the employee's entire period of employment with the employer, if shorter).

TABLE OF FACTORS

Average entry age	Factors	
	Average compensation benefit formula	Other formulas
Less than 30 .....	0.5	0.75
30 to 40 .....	0.4	0.6
Over 40 .....	0.2	0.3

(v) *Examples.* The following examples illustrate the rules of this paragraph (b)(2):

*Example 1.* Plan A is a contributory DB plan that is a defined benefit excess plan providing a benefit equal to 2.0 percent of employees' average annual compensation at or below covered compensation, plus 2.5 percent of average annual compensation above covered compensation, times years of service up to 35. Under the plan, average annual compensation is determined using a five-consecutive-year period for purposes of § 1.401(a)(4)-3(e)(2). The plan requires employee contributions at a rate of four percent of plan year compensation for all employees. Assume that the plan satisfies the demographic requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(B) of this section. Under these facts, the plan satisfies the eligibility requirements of paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. Assume, further, that the average attained age for all employees in the plan is 55, and that the average years of participation of all employees in the plan is 10. The average entry age for the plan is therefore 45, and, accordingly, the appropriate factor under the table is 0.2. Thus, in applying the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-3(b) to this plan for the plan year (including the requirements of § 1.401(l)-3), the employee's base benefit percentage and excess benefit percentage are each reduced by 0.8 percent (4 percent $\times$ 0.2) and equal 1.2 percent and 1.7 percent, respectively.

*Example 2.* The facts are the same as in *Example 1*, except that the employee contribution rate is two percent of plan year compensation up to the covered compensation level, and four percent for plan year compensation at or above that contribution breakpoint. The employer elects to apply the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(2) of this section to determine the reduction in the base benefit percentage. Because the contribution breakpoint is equal to the integration level, the weight of the employee contribution rate below the contribution breakpoint is 100 percent, and the

weight of the employee contribution rate above the contribution breakpoint is zero. Thus, the weighted average of employee contribution rates is two percent. Under the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(2) of this section, the reduction in the employee's base benefit percentage is 0.4. In applying the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-3(b) to this plan (including the requirements of § 1.401(l)-3), the employee's base benefit percentage is 1.6 percent, and the employee's excess benefit percentage is 1.7.

*Example 3.* The facts are the same as in *Example 1*, except that the employee contribution rate is two percent of plan year compensation up to 50 percent of the covered compensation level, and four percent for plan year compensation at or above that contribution breakpoint. Because the contribution breakpoint is equal to 50 percent of the integration level, the weight of the employee contribution rate below the contribution breakpoint is 50 percent, and the weight of the employee contribution rate above the contribution breakpoint is 50 percent. Thus, the weighted average of employee contribution rates is three percent. Under the alternative method in paragraph (b)(2)(iii)(B)(2) of this section, the reduction in the employee's base benefit percentage is 0.6. In applying the safe harbor requirements of § 1.401(a)(4)-3(b) to this plan (including the requirements of § 1.401(l)-3), the employee's base benefit percentage is 1.4 percent, and the employee's excess benefit percentage is 1.7.

*Example 4.* The facts are the same as in *Example 1*, except that the plan is tested using the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)-3(c). Assume Employee M benefits under Plan A and has a normal accrual rate for the plan year (calculated with respect to Employee M's total accrued benefit) of 2.2 percent of average annual compensation. In applying the general test in § 1.401(a)(4)-3(c) with respect to employer-provided benefits, this rate is reduced by 0.8 to yield a normal accrual rate of 1.4 percent. This rate may then be adjusted using either of the optional rules in § 1.401(a)(4)-3(d)(3)(i) or (ii).

(3) *Minimum-benefit method—(i) Application of uniform factors.* A contributory DB plan that satisfies the uniform rate requirement of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section and the minimum benefit requirement of paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section may apply the adjustments provided in paragraph (b)(2)(iii) of this section as if the average entry age of employees in the plan were within the range of 30 to 40, without regard to the actual demographics of the employees in the plan.

(ii) *Minimum benefit requirement.* This requirement is satisfied if the plan provides that, in plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)-13(a) and (b), each employee will accrue a benefit that equals or exceeds the sum of—

(A) The accrued benefit derived from employee contributions made for plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, determined in accordance with section 411(c); and

(B) Fifty percent of the total benefit accrued in plan years beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as determined under the plan benefit formula without regard to that portion of the formula designed to satisfy the minimum benefit requirement of this paragraph (b)(3)(ii).

(iii) *Example.* The following example illustrates the minimum-benefit method of this paragraph (b)(3):

*Example.* Plan A is contributory DB plan. For the plan year beginning in 1994, Employee M participates in Plan A and accrues a benefit under the terms of the plan (without regard to the minimum benefit requirement of paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section) of \$3,000. The portion of Employee M's benefit accrual for the plan year beginning in 1994 derived from employee contributions is \$2,000, determined by applying the rules of section 411(c) to such contributions. The requirement of paragraph (b)(3)(ii) of this section is not satisfied for the plan year beginning in 1994 unless the plan provides that Employee M's benefit accrual for the plan year beginning in 1994 is equal to \$3,500 (\$2,000+(50 percent×\$3,000)).

(4) *Grandfather rule for plans in existence on May 14, 1990.* A contributory DB plan that satisfies paragraph (c)(4) of this section may determine an employee's employer-provided benefit by subtracting from the employee's total benefit the employee-provided benefits determined using any reasonable method set forth in the plan, provided that it is the same method used in determining whether the plan satisfies paragraph (c)(4)(ii)(D) of this section.

(5) *Government-plan method.* A contributory DB plan that is established and maintained for its employees by the government of any state or political subdivision or by any agency or instrumentality thereof may treat an

employee's total benefit as entirely employer-provided.

(6) *Cessation of employee contributions.* If a contributory DB plan provides that no employee contributions may be made to the plan after the last day of the first plan year beginning on or after the effective date of these regulations, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)-13 (a) and (b), the plan may treat an employee's total benefit as entirely employer-provided.

(c) *Rules applicable in determining whether employee-provided benefits are nondiscriminatory in amount—*(1) *In general.* A contributory DB plan satisfies § 1.401(a)(4)-1(b)(2) with respect to the amount of employee-provided benefits for a plan year only if the plan satisfies the requirements of paragraph (c)(2), (c)(3), or (c)(4) of this section for the plan year. This requirement applies regardless of the method used to determine the amount of employer-provided benefits under paragraph (b) of this section.

(2) *Same rate of contributions.* This requirement is satisfied for a plan year if the employee contribution rate (within the meaning of paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section) is the same for all employees for the plan year.

(3) *Total-benefits method.* This requirement is satisfied for a plan year if—

(i) The total benefits (i.e., the sum of employer-provided and employee-provided benefits) under the plan would satisfy § 1.401(a)(4)-3 if all benefits were treated as employer-provided benefits; and

(ii) The plan's contribution requirements satisfy paragraph (b)(2)(ii)(A) of this section.

(4) *Grandfather rules for plans in existence on May 14, 1990—*(i) *In general.* This requirement is satisfied for a plan year if the plan contained provisions as of May 14, 1990, that meet the requirements of paragraph (c)(4)(ii) or (c)(4)(iii) of this section.

(ii) *Graded contribution rates.* The plan's provisions meet the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(ii) if all the following requirements are met:

(A) The provisions require employee contributions at a greater rate (expressed as a percentage of compensation) at higher levels of compensation than at lower levels of compensation.

(B) The required rate of employee contributions is not increased after May 14, 1990, although the level of compensation at which employee contributions are required may be increased or decreased.

(C) All employees are permitted to make employee contributions under the plan at a uniform rate with respect to all compensation, beginning no later than the last day of the first plan year to which these regulations apply, as set forth in § 1.401(a)(4)-13 (a) and (b).

(D) The benefits provided on account of employee contributions at lower levels of compensation are comparable to those provided on account of employee contributions at higher levels of compensation.

(iii) *Prior year compensation.* The plan's provisions meet the requirements of this paragraph (c)(4)(iii) if they are part of a plan maintained by more than one employer that requires employee contributions and the rate of required employee contributions, expressed as a percentage of compensation for the last calendar year ending before the beginning of the plan year, is the same for all employees.

[T.D. 8485, 58 FR 46802, Sept. 3, 1993]

**§ 1.401(a)(4)-7 Imputation of permitted disparity.**

(a) *Introduction.* In determining whether a plan satisfies section 401(a)(4) with respect to the amount of contributions or benefits, section 401(a)(5)(C) allows the disparities permitted under section 401(l) to be taken into account. For purposes of satisfying the safe harbors of §§ 1.401(a)(4)-2(b)(2) and 1.401(a)(4)-3(b), permitted disparity may be taken into account only by satisfying section 401(l) in form in accordance with § 1.401(l)-2 or 1.401(l)-3, respectively. For purposes of the general tests of §§ 1.401(a)(4)-2(c) and 1.401(a)(4)-3(c), permitted disparity may be taken into account only in accordance with the rules of this section. In general, this section allows permitted disparity to be arithmetically imputed with respect to employer-provided contributions or benefits by determining an adjusted allocation or accrual rate that appropriately accounts for the permitted disparity with respect to each employee. Paragraph (b)

of this section provides rules for imputing permitted disparity with respect to employer-provided contributions by adjusting each employee's unadjusted allocation rate. Paragraph (c) of this section provides rules for imputing permitted disparity with respect to employer-provided benefits by adjusting each employee's unadjusted accrual rate. Paragraph (d) of this section provides rules of general application.

(b) *Adjusting allocation rates*—(1) *In general.* The rules in this paragraph (b) produce an adjusted allocation rate for each employee by determining the excess contribution percentage under the hypothetical formula that would yield the allocation actually received by the employee, if the plan took into account the full disparity permitted under section 401(l)(2) and used the taxable wage base as the integration level. This adjusted allocation rate is used to determine whether the amount of contributions under the plan satisfies the general test of § 1.401(a)(4)-2(c) and to apply the average benefit percentage test on the basis of contributions under § 1.410(b)-5(d). Paragraphs (b)(2) and (b)(3) of this section apply to employees whose plan year compensation does not exceed and does exceed, respectively, the taxable wage base, and paragraph (b)(4) of this section provides definitions.

(2) *Employees whose plan year compensation does not exceed taxable wage base.* If an employee's plan year compensation does not exceed the taxable wage base, the employee's adjusted allocation rate is the lesser of the A rate and the B rate determined under the formulas below, where the permitted disparity rate and the unadjusted allocation rate are determined under paragraph (b)(4) (ii) and (iv) of this section, respectively.

A Rate =  $2 \times$  unadjusted allocation rate  
B Rate = unadjusted allocation rate + permitted disparity rate

(3) *Employees whose plan year compensation exceeds taxable wage base.* If an employee's plan year compensation exceeds the taxable wage base, the employee's adjusted allocation rate is the lesser of the C rate and the D rate determined under the formulas below, where allocations and the permitted disparity rate are determined under